

MOLDOVA

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The archives of Soviet political police in Moldova

The documents of the former political police of the Moldavian SSR are preserved in several archives of the present day Republic of Moldova. The main bulk of them can be found in the archive of the Service for Information and Security (SIS) of the Republic of Moldova, the institution that is the official heir of KGB of MSSR. Since January 2010 when a Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Totalitarian Regime in the Republic of Moldova has been set up, a part of the KGB documents has been transferred to the National Archive of the Republic of Moldova. Another set of documents of the former Soviet political police can be found in the archive of the Ministry of Interior. Part of the documents were later transferred to the National Archive as well. Another set of documents pertaining to the activity of KGB and its predecessors are located in the archive of Social-Political Organizations of the Republic of Moldova (AOSPRM), former archive of Central Committee of Communist Party of Moldova (CC of PCM). Mainly it is about the correspondence between CC of PCM and NKVD-NKGB-MGB-KGB from 1940 to 1989.

The total number of files is not known exactly. But the most valuable ones and made accessible in the last 7 years — those of repressed persons during the Soviet period — are known with mathematical precision. In 2010 there were 52.231 personal files of the victims of political terror in the SIS depositories and 33.590 of the persons repressed by the Soviet regime in the archives of the Ministry of Interior, mainly persons deported during the three mass

deportations from Moldavian SSR (June 12–13 1941, July 5–6 1949 and April 1 1951). Out of the total number of the files of 85.821 repressed persons, 25.000 files were transferred between 2010 and 2014 to the National Archive: about 10.000 files from the Ministry of Interior and 15.000 files from the SIS archive.

As mentioned above, the archive of SIS represents the archive of the former KGB of the Moldavian SSR. Besides the fond of the repressed persons which is the largest, there are also other fonds, but the access to them is restricted till nowadays. In 2010, the members of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Communist Totalitarian Regime in the Republic of Moldova had access to some of them. One of the most important fond as it gives general information about the activities of the NKVD-NKGB-KGB is called *Orders and reports of the KGB of MSSR* («Приказы и распоряжения КГБ МССР») which covers the period from 1940–1941, 1944–1989 and contains 3,765 files (дело). Another fond is referring the administrative issues and contains 493 files. The largest fond is called the Filtration and Trophy fond referring to persons repatriated in USSR after 1945 (the majority of them forcefully) and prisoners of war (48,000 files).

Unfortunately, one of the most valuable fonds of documents related to the repressive policies of the Soviet political police were destroyed in 1994–1995 following the publication of the volume of documents edited by Valeriu Pasat («Трудные страницы истории Молдовы». Москва: Терра, 1994). The context in which the liquidation of the above mentioned fond happened was that a pro-Russian parliament was elected in 1994 following a four year period of incipient de-communization. Pasat's volume

contains excerpts from reports (*докладные записки*) of NKVD-NKGB-KGB of Moldavia from 1940 to late 1950s. Fearing historians would continue the publication of these reports till late 1980s and would mention the then politicians that started their careers in 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the leaders of the Democratic-Agrarian Party that had won a comfortable majority in the parliament decided to destroy those files.

Other fonds have been preserved however. Among the other fonds, smaller ones, there is a fond covering the mass terror of 1937–1938 in the former Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (this fond was split between SIS and Ministry of Interior). The SIS archive contains a small fond (4 volumes) related to the partisan movement in the Moldavian SSR during the Second World War, the great bulk of documents — more than 1000 files — related to this topic being preserved in the archive of the former Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldavia (presently the Archive of the Social-Political Organizations of the Republic of Moldova, AOSPRM). There is another fond called Documents of district administrations of NKVD of Moldavian SSR covering 1940–1941 and 1944–1946 (11 volumes). There is a small fond called Lists of the Romanian citizens expelled from USSR in 1945 (3 volumes). Related to deportations, there were preserved one volume of the file on mass Deportations from Moldavian SSR in July 1949 and one volume of documents related to the repatriation of Bessarabian Germans in Germany in the fall of 1940 after the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia, a part of Romania, in June 1940, following the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 23 1939. This small fonds — on Romanian citizens expelled in 1945, deportations of 1949 and repatriation of Germans, as well as decisions of troika during the Great Terror in MASSR in 1937–1938 have been transferred to the National Archive of the Republic of Moldova and can be accessed by anyone interested in, be they Moldovan citizens or foreign nationals. The fond on partisans and several others like that on Special Departments (*Особые отделы*) were not accessible to the researchers after 1991, the access being denied

even to the members of the Presidential Commission created in 2010.

The other important archive that hosts an important number of the documents related to the activities of the Soviet political police is the archive of the Ministry of Interior of Moldova which hosts the archive of the former civil police (militia) of Soviet Moldavia. The archive of the Ministry of Interior contains mainly files of the former deported persons from MSSR (including MASSR, from 1930). But it also contains files of NKVD from the Moldavian ASSR (a part of Ukrainian SSR, 1924–1940, on the left of the Dniester River), especially related to the victims of the Great Terror, 1937–1938 (59 files) and a fond of persons condemned by extrajudicial institutions (such as Military Tribunal) covering 1919–1952 and containing 4806 files. As noted above, the largest fond from former MVD is that of the persons repressed by the Soviet regime, mainly persons deported during the three mass deportations from Moldavian SSR (33.590 files).

The laws on access to archives

The access to archives in the Republic of Moldova is made according to the Law 880-XII On the Archival Fond of the Republic of Moldova adopted in January 22 1992 by the Parliament and promulgated by the then President Mircea Snegur. Subsequently, on May 27 1992, through a special decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova there was adopted a Statute of Archival Fond of the Republic of Moldova which ruled more in detail the access to various types of documents and belonging to various archives and special depositories. The degree of access to the fonds and files pertaining to the activities of the Soviet political police was anticipated by the categorizations of the archives of the former KGB of Moldavian SSR and Ministry of Interior (MVD) of MSSR as special depositories and not as archives. Hence, by default the access to the files issued by these two Soviet institutions was limited to the researchers or denied altogether for about two decades after the independence.

Section III of the Statute stipulated that the access to judicial files — referring to the files of politically condemned persons from the Soviet period — is 75 year after these documents were being issued. This means that documents issued by the NKVD or other repressive organs of the Soviet regime in 1940 (the year when Bessarabia was occupied by USSR) were to be accessible to historians and other interested persons starting in 2015. In practice, the access has been denied to individual files issued by the Soviet political police before the year 1940 (in MASSR, 1924–1940). This was true about the files on the various activities of the VCheKa, OGPU, NKVD, NKGB, MGB, KGB on the territory of MASSR and MSSR. The earliest files pertaining to political repression in MASSR/MSSR that are preserved in Chişinău archives are from 1919 and 1920.

The access to the files of the persons repressed on political ground by Soviet political police — executions, arrests, deportations — are regulated by a special law that has been adopted in early 1990s in almost every former Soviet republic. It is about the Law 1225-XII on the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Political Repressions adopted on December 8 1992. In conformity with article 3 of this Law, all persons condemned by VCheKa, OGPU, NKVD, NKGB, MGB, KGB from November 7 1917 to June 23 1990 (when the Declaration of Sovereignty of Moldova has been adopted) for various “crimes” like “counter revolutionary activity”, “treason of the fatherland”, “defamation of social and political order”, “violations of laws stipulating the separation of Church and state” and so on were to be rehabilitated. Based on that Law, all the former victims that survived the repression and their relatives were entitled to have access to the files and get a photocopy for free. The application of this Law however was restricted by governments that had a pro-Communist or pro-Soviet ideological pedigree. This happened especially during the 9 year rule of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM), under the Presidency of Vladimir Voronin (2001–2009), the last but one Ministry of Interior of the Moldavian SSR in 1989–1990.

A turning point in changing the legislation related to the access of files and fonds of the Soviet political police in Moldova happened in 2010. On January 14 2010 the then President (*ad interim*) of Moldova, Mihai Ghimpu, adopted a Decree on the creation of the Presidential Commission for the Study and Evaluation of the Communist Totalitarian Regime in the Republic of Moldova. According to this Decree, all state institutions, including the Service of Information and Security and Ministry of Interior, were obliged to open their depositories for the members of the Commission in order elaborating a report on the crimes committed by Soviet occupational forces on the territory of the Republic of Moldova. Although this Decree is still valid, it had judicial force only for the period of the existence of the Commission (January 14 2010 — June 30 2010). The Parliament in 2010 and in subsequent years was very fragmented both politically and geopolitically and it did not succeed to pass laws that would make access to the archives of Soviet political police permanent. Understanding that changing the legislation was a deadlock the Presidency in 2010 adopted a strategy in order continuing the policy of extending access to the archives of the KGB. More exactly, it was decided that the SIS and Ministry of Interior would transfer their fonds step by step to the National Archive of the Republic of Moldova. As all the fonds of the National Archive are in open access (with some minimal restrictions related to personal data) automatically all the files transferred from other secret archives became accessible both to Moldovan citizens and foreign nationals. In this way, the model Moldova followed in the liberalization of legislation pertaining to the access to Communist political police was different from that of the majority of the former countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Romania etc).

Access the KGB archives: its specificity and limits

Except for short periods, in the last 26 years from its independence, the access to KGB archives was denied in Moldova both to local

historians and foreign nationals. The first time the archives of the former KGB of Moldavian SSR was open to the researchers was in the early 1990s till 1994–1995. In the that period, several historians, among them Elena Postică, Ion Țurcanu, Veronica Boldișor and several others had access to the KGB files. The majority of these historians were interested to shed light on the degree of armed resistance against the Soviet regime in Bessarabia in the aftermath of the Second World War. Both Postică and Țurcanu published articles in academic journals and newspapers both in Moldova and Romania on that subject, as well as published each a book on the anti-Soviet resistance in Moldavian SSR in late 1940s-early 1950s (in Romanian, 1998 and 2000). Till nowadays, these two books are referential on that subject, but of course they are outdated both in empirical and conceptual terms. Another historian, one of the main historians of the Soviet Moldavia, that had access to KGB files in early 1990s but continued to share its pro-Soviet attitude in his works after 1991, was Vladimir Țaranov, former director of the Institute of History for more than a decade (1977–1991). From the archives of KGB he used mainly files related to the mass deportation of 1949 and did not manifest any interest in the resistance issues or other aspects of history of MSSR that would reflect a repressive policy against the local population. In his several books published after 1998, Țaranov continued to consider the mass deportations as a “tragedy” of the local population and did not label these mass repressive campaigns as crimes of the Soviet regime like some of the boldest historians did that already during the Perestroika period.

In mid 1995, the access to the archives of the former KGB was denied again for about 15 years. This was due to political factors: in 1994, a pro-Russian political party, Agrarian-Democratic Party, won the majority at the parliamentary elections and thus the access to KGB archives was initially restricted and then banned altogether.

Between 1998 and 2000 Moldova was governed by a pro-European coalition of political parties, but this did not have a substantial

consequence on politics of memory, especially in terms of access to the archives of the former KGB of Moldavian SSR.

In 2001 a party called the Party of Communists of Republic of Moldova won the majority of the votes in the parliament and once again in 2005 and thus as one can easily anticipates the access to KGB archives was denied till 2009 when Vladimir Voronin's party lost its leverage on power in Moldova. During Voronin's one party rule even members of the families of those repressed in the Soviet times were denied to consult the files that were deposited in SIS archive or in the archive of the Ministry of Interior. Some researchers that did their Ph.D. on mass repressions and insisted they would like access these files were even threatened that if they will insist they would have face problems (including threats about the security of their family members).

In 2009–2010 started another period in terms of politics of memory in the Republic of Moldova. A coalition of four pro-European parties won the majority in the national parliament and as it was expected, the access to the archives of KGB became one of the main objectives of the new regime. One party, the Liberal one, made the opening of the archives of the former Soviet political police its main objective as a tool against its political rival, the Party of Communists, but also as a part of the larger effort to distance Moldovan society as a whole from its Soviet past and encourage closer relations with Romania and European Union. As a result, when Liberal Party (which had 15% of members of the parliament) got its representative appointed as *ad interim* President of Moldova, a Presidential Commission for the Study and Evaluation of Communist Totalitarian Regimes was created in mid January 2010. Gathering 30 historians, linguists, sociologist, lawyers and writers, this Commission had free access to the fonds available in early 1990s and to other fonds that nobody knew they existed in Moldova. Other interested historians or journalists non-members of the Commission had access to KGB and MVD archives in January-June 2010 when the Commission official-

ly functioned. Unofficially, till December 2010 those members and non-members of the Commission had the possibility to consult mainly the fond of repressed persons from former KGB archive and MVD, but also several other fonds. As mentioned above, the legislation regarding the access of to KGB/MVD archives has been not changed after 2010, as not all pro-EU parties represented in the parliament agreed on that. In consequence, it was decided that files form SIS and Ministry of Interior would be transferred to the National Archives and automatically make them accessible to all those interested. Till 2014 in this way there were transferred about 25,000 files related to repressed persons, but also several other small fonds related to Great Terror in MASSR in 1937–1938, mass deportation operations (reports on the organization, deployment and immediate aftermath of deportations), repatriation of Romanian citizens after 1944.

The reading room of the National Archive can receive up to 30 researchers at a time. Both local and foreign historians and non-historians presenting a letter from their institution either in Romanian, English or Russian can have access to all documents of the Soviet political police that have been transferred so far from SIS and Ministry of Interior. One can order 5 files per day and make photocopies with their own camera for 10 MDL per files (50 USD cents for one file, *delo*).

The SIS has a reading room for 4 persons at a time. But the real problem is that it was not yet transformed in a modern archive with specific working hours. One problem is related to the legislative aspect, another one to the lack of cadres to serve in the reading rooms and search for files in the depositories. Usually SIS archive gives access to specific files pertaining to repressions both before 1953 and after 1953 up to late 1980s, but every request is examined individually in a monthly period.

KGB archives and society

The interest in the KGB archives in Moldova was sparked as elsewhere in the former Soviet

Union by Perestroika and *glasnost*, in the late 1980s — early 1990s. Starting in 1990 and 1991 there were published articles and interviews by and with responsible persons from KGB dealing with archival depository. Several important materials in this sense have been published in *Moldova Socialistă* (Советская Молдавия after 1991 *Независимая Молдова*), of special interest being materials signed by A. Tirikin, former chief of the archival department of KGB of MSSR. The pressure from intellectuals and Popular Front of Moldova, the leading non-government organization in the forefront of the Moldavian national movement of late 1980s — early 1990s, as well as of society at large, previously prohibited topics like mass deportations, Soviet Occupation of 1940 and 1944, mass famine of 1946–1947 became the main topics of public debate. In this framework, historians raised the question related to the access to the party and KGB archives. The access to KGB archives became a reality however only after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. As noted above, several historians interested in the disclosing of resistance anti-Soviet movement had access to KGB archives in 1991–1995. There was no discussion, at least a systematical one, about the full access to KGB archives and the need for lustration in early 1990s. One explanation is that the absolute majority of the new elite of independent Moldova came from the higher or lower ranks of the former Communist Party of Moldavia and they did not want them being reminded about that. Some of them collaborated in some way or another with KGB. Only after 2001 when the Party of Communists, the first party to contain the name Communist won the parliamentary elections a great bulk of intellectuals and their representatives in the national legislature started to think seriously about opening the archives of the former Soviet political police as a strategy to compromise their political opponents, the Communists, as well as a way to push for more democratic reforms in Moldova.

The first public debate about lustration took place in April 2006 — March 2007 when the leading newspaper *Jurnal de Chişinău* launched a series of interviews with leading intellectuals

asking them about the need to open KGB archives and pursuing the lustration law. The majority of more than 200 persons interviewed stated that they did not collaborate with KGB. Only a few admitted they collaborated with Soviet political police while not considering this fact a very serious embarrassment or a motive for repenting.

After 2009 when the pro-Romanian and pro-European parties came to power, the doors of KGB archives were largely open. But the members of the Presidential Commission created in 2010 never had access to the most sensitive files related to the collaboration of still active politicians or public intellectuals with Soviet political police.

In 2013 a parliamentary commission was created in order to examine this possibility under the chairmanship of the member of the parliament Ion Hadârcă, the first leader of the Popular Front and former secretary of Moldova Writers Union in late 1980s, member of the Liberal Party. Nothing came after the activity of this commission however.

After 2014 when the pro-European elite was involved in the money laundering in huge amounts (1 billion USD) and compromised, the interest in the access to KGB archives in Moldova lost its momentum. It is not an important issue in the program of the newly created pro-European parties after 2014. Partly it happened because the solution suggested as a result of the Presidential Commission to transfer gradually the KGB documents to the National Archive created the impression the problem was solved or is in the process of being solved. But the problem persists as the process of transferring the KGB files to the National Archive is discontinued since 2014 on the official ground that the latter does not have enough space and administrative capacity to host and make available to the public the documents.

At the same time, the public interest in the further opening of the KGB files and especially of the present day politicians still active is not a hot topic any more. This is explained by the fact the majority of this category of politicians like the former President Vladimir Voronin

lost their grip on power and they are not perceived as articulating a serious political force any more.

Equally or even more important, another explanation of the diminished interest in KGB files or lustration from the part of the society at large after 2014 is related to the fact the new post-Soviet elite that has not been involved in one way or another in the Soviet Nomenclatura did not meet the expectations of the pro-European and anti-Communist elites and society.

Organization, initiatives and algorithms of archival research

There were several initiatives from the part of non-government organizations focused on the increasing the access to KGB files and arguing for the importance of adopting a law of lustration in the broader framework of de-communization process. Besides the timid initiatives of de-communization in early 1990s and the initiative of 2006–2007 to launch a public debate about lustration and need to open the KGB archives mentioned above, the most important projects in Moldova related to this topic are very recent. In 2010, The Association of Young Historians of Moldova, with financial support from Moldova Soros Foundation, launched a project entitled *Declassification of files of the Service of Information and Security*. The director of the project was the Secretary of Presidential Commission for the Study and Evaluation of the Communist Totalitarian Regime in the Republic of Moldova, Mihai Tașcă (Ph.D. in law) assisted by Alexandru Postică (lawyer), Valentina Basiul (journalist), Tudor Ciobanu, Sergiu Musteață and Corina Rezneac, all three historians. As a result of this project, a guide to the archives of the Republic of Moldova was for the first time published (2011, 205 pp.), in which a special attention was paid to the files of the KGB and MVD archives, to the legal framework of access to archives etc.

As a matter of fact, the above mentioned project was conceived in order to support the activity of the Presidential Commission for the

Study and Evaluation of Communist Totalitarian Regime. The members of the Commission took part in a public campaign to inform the society about the importance of disclosing the KGB archives for the democratization of Moldova. Among the most active members of the Commission to participate in numerous TV and radio programs and inform the society about these issues were Octavian Țăcu, Igor Cașu (vice chairman of the Commission), Mihai Tașcă (secretary of the Commission), Gheorghe Palade, Sergiu Musteață (vice chairman of the Commission), Viorica Cemortan-Olaru, Anatol Petrencu, Elena Postică, Pavel Parasca, Gheorghe Negru, Gheorghe Cojocar (the chairman of the Commission), Vladimir Beșleagă, Sergiu Chircă. During several years (2010 to 2014), two members of the Commission Igor Cașu and Mihai Tașcă contributed on weekly basis to the rubric *The Archives of Communism* in the leading newspaper of the period *Adevărul*, publishing materials with pictures about the repressive policy of the Soviet regime of the territory of present-day Moldova. The existence of the Presidential Commission — supported by the most important NGOs and pro-European intellectuals as well as by the main TV channels and radio — and its related activities based on the long lasting involvement of its members was the main project that contributed not only to the opening access to KGB archives, but especially to spreading the information disclosed in these archives and changing the attitude of the larger segments of Moldovan society toward Communism. The most enduring results of these projects were the revision of history textbooks in 2013. These textbooks, published in Romanian and Russian are mandatory till nowadays in all schools in Moldova no matter the language of instruction, Romanian or Russian. Two members of the Presidential Commission participated in the elaboration of the new history textbooks, Igor Cașu and Igor Șarov (textbooks for 12th and 9th grade).

As a result of the activities of the Presidential Commission and the project initiated by The As-

sociation of Young Historians, a large number of former repressed persons or their relatives have been encouraged to consult the KGB or MVD archives for files related to their own fate or the members of their families. The main guide for the relatives and researchers in order to do research in the former archives of Soviet political police is a 4 volume *Cartea Memoriei* (Book of Memory) coordinated by Elena Postică in 1999–2005 published by the Publishing House *Știința* and supported by Moldova Soros Foundation. This book contains about 80,000 names of those repressed on political motives covering 1940–1986 years, with reference to the locality, district, year of repressions, the motive invoked by the Soviets and the place where they have been detained. This book is not accessible online, but it is available in almost every locality being distributed for free to public libraries. In order to get the file of a repressed person, the interested person should write a letter to SIS or/and Ministry of Interior indicating the family name, name and middle name as well as the year of birth of the person repressed. In one month these institutions are obliged by law to give an answer in this regard. Upon the positive response, the person requesting the file is entitled to have access to the *delo* and make a photocopy if he/she is the one repressed or is one of his relatives. As to the researchers both Moldovan and foreign citizens who want to have access to the KGB and MVD archives, they should write a letter to SIS or/and Ministry of Interior to get access to one fond or another. In a month period the answer should be given specifying the date when the researcher can get the needed files if they are declassified. The files of former KGB and MVD that have been already transferred to the National Archive — as mentioned twice above, about 25,000 — can be accessed easier by anybody interested in, usually in a 5 day period, but for those coming outside Chișinău the files are released the next day upon request and approval of the director of the archive. The price for photocopying one file (*delo*) from National Archive is 10 MDL (50 USD cents).